

and fares. Participating agencies can access Trip Planner to plan necessary trips when a wheelchair lift, infant car seat, or daycare stop is needed.

## Emerging Directions

- Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the transportation issues of the growing elderly population, and of increasing rural isolation. Understanding the state role in providing basic transportation needs is necessary to effectively develop partnerships in meeting the state's interest.
- Consistent funding and service levels for demand response service by both transit agencies and other providers need to be addressed. Lack of consistent funding acts as a barrier to efficient coordinated transportation service.
- Continued focus on better coordination between services is needed to minimize duplication and make the most of available revenue. The Agency Council for Coordinated Transportation should continue its efforts to provide this coordination and needs adequate funding to accomplish this goal. Continued coordination to allow implementation of programs like Trip Planner should occur.
- New public transportation service strategies are needed to improve evolving transit markets, particularly rural, elderly, and suburban mobility.
- A policy defining the state's interest in Intercity transportation is needed from the Transportation Commission. This policy would define the state's objectives in intercity transportation access needs.

***The Washington State Transportation Commission and the Washington State Department of Transportation are in the process of updating the Washington Transportation Plan. This long range plan is based on data analysis and is focused on ten issues: System Preservation, System Efficiencies, Safety, Transportation Access, Bottlenecks and Chokepoints, Economy and Jobs, Moving Freight, Future Visions, Health and Environment and Funding and Governance This plan will shape future transportation budget proposals.***

For more on this topic: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp)

### Transportation Access

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## Transportation Access

***Where basic transportation services are indispensable for all citizens' societal engagement, how is a "safety net" for transportation needs to be provided for every citizen in every community?***

Washington's Transportation Plan (WTP) is identifying key issues for people without access to an automobile or the ability to drive who face increasing isolation and the inability to have access to basic necessities or activities enhancing the quality of their lives.

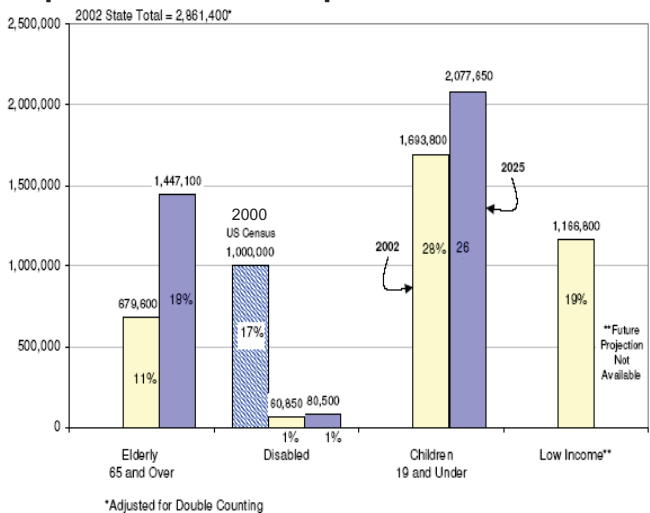
Washington State citizens require access to basic transportation services. Individuals without access or who cannot transport themselves rely on services provided by volunteers, human service agencies, and public transportation agencies. This population is referred to as "persons with special transportation needs." Persons with special transportation needs fall into four broad groups: the elderly, people with low incomes, persons with disabilities, and children. It is difficult to determine how many people in these groups need specialized transportation services, but demand is growing.

Not all people who fit one or more of the four groups have a special transportation need, nor do they need financial assistance to access transportation. More information is required to better assess needs.



## People With Special Transportation Needs Include the Elderly, Persons With Disabilities, Children and Low-income Individuals.

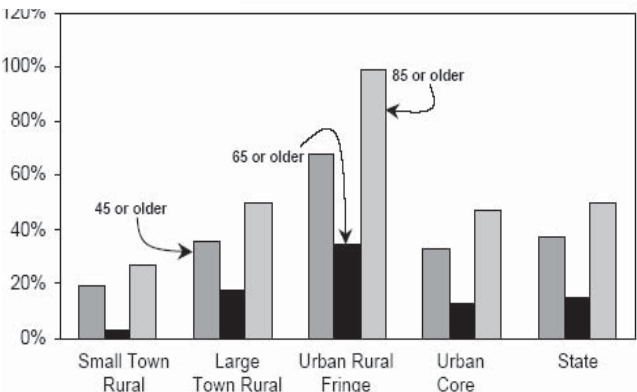
### People with Potential Transportation Access Needs



### Washington's Elderly Population is Growing

The elderly are a growing share of the population and they are driving more and longer than their predecessors. They are "aging in place," increasingly living in suburban areas

### Percent Change in Elderly Population by Rural Classification Washington, 1990-2000



where driving is essential, and public transit service is difficult and expensive to provide. As a person ages, the ability of the person to meet their own transportation needs diminishes. The growing proportion of "old" elderly (85+) will increase demand for demand response public transportation. The growing number of older drivers will require special roadway safety emphases such as signing.

### Persons with Disabilities in Washington

It is difficult to know how many people with disabilities in Washington have special transportation needs. What we do know, however, is that the 2000 U.S. Census says there are 1 million people with disabilities in Washington. Not all of these disabilities create a need for special transportation services.

There are a total of 60,850 persons with disabilities receiving assistance from the Dept. of Health and Human Services (DSHS). According to the National Health Information Statistical Database, in Washington sensory limitations severe enough to affect everyday life afflict about five percent of the adult population. About 228,000 people have physical disabilities that affect their ability to walk and get around outside the home.



### Washington's Children

From 1990 to 2000, the number of persons 19 and under increased 20.5 percent and account for nearly 28 percent of the total state population. More than 1 million children attend school in Washington and state funding covers 65 percent of the school districts' transportation costs. Transportation for childcare and after school programs is often limited, particularly for kids in rural communities. Homeless children have transportation difficulties when transitioning from temporary housing locations.

### Washington's Low Income Population

In 2002, 1.16 million people with low incomes were assisted by DSHS, totaling \$2.45 billion in assistance. Low-income residents spend a higher percentage of their income on transportation than others. However, many people on public assistance subsidies receive transportation support. Low-income people in some rural counties and Tribal Nations may not have access to public transportation services.

### Transportation Challenges in Rural Areas

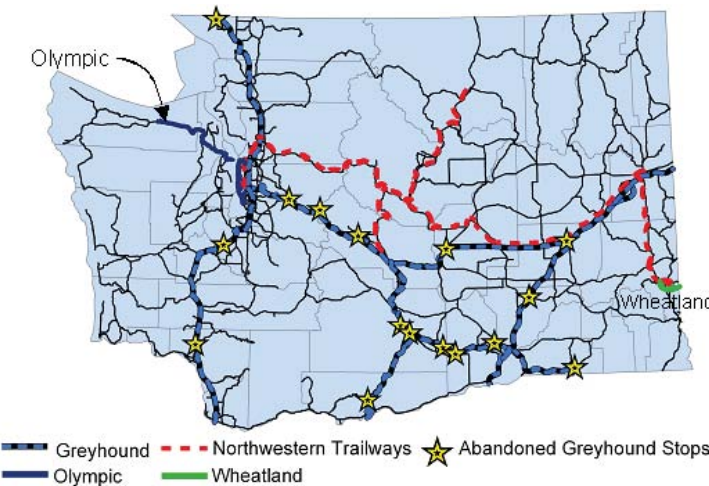
To maintain economic viability of rural communities, people in these communities must maintain access to the urban centers for banking, commerce, law, engineering, medicine, and other specializations. In rural areas, this access is normally provided by automobile. With limited options, and long distances, providing this access to people who cannot drive is a challenge.

Intercity connections are supplied through a network of public and private services. As the business model for private providers changes, smaller rural communities are losing access to the national intercity network and the educational, employment, social service, and cultural opportunities in urban communities.

There are gaps in programs and funding that leave many of Washington's citizens without access to transportation for basic necessities, personal business, education and recreation. This is particularly true in rural and suburban areas outside of public transportation service areas.

Private intercity bus companies are abandoning service to small communities throughout Washington. In Summer 2004, Greyhound cancelled service in 21 mostly rural communities. Greyhound routes and abandoned service stops are shown in this map below. Without access to transportation, many residents will not be able to leave their communities.

### Intercity Bus Service



### Special Transportation Service Providers

Public transit agency spending represents a majority of funding for access services, but many people, especially in rural areas of the state do not have public transportation services. The continued loss of intercity bus services has further contributed to a sense of rural isolation. A large number of non-profit and for profit groups provide access services in all areas of the state. Many of these services rely on volunteers and funding is precarious. Demand response services are expensive to

provide and are taking an increasing share of limited transit funding. With current funding, transit agencies face a trade-off between demand response service and fixed route service.

Public transportation systems are seeing an increasing demand for expensive door-to-door service that significantly reduces their ability to maintain fixed route services at current levels. This challenge is further compounded by the increasing demand for trips by the growing elderly population, particularly in rural and suburban areas that are difficult or impossible to serve with traditional transit service. Public transportation agencies provided 4.8 million demand response trips in 2003 at a cost of \$104 million, more than \$21 per trip.

In addition to public transit agencies, a broad network of public and private non-profit and for-profit agencies provide specialized transportation services. The large and small public and private agencies face considerable challenges with insurance, reliable long-term funding (often based on grants), volunteer recruitment, and program costs vs. transportation funding choices.

To better coordinate Medicaid-related transportation (\$50 million a year to purchase 2.8 million trips) 8 medical assistance brokers, covering 13 brokerage areas, match up clients with providers.

### Current Efforts underway with Transportation Access Coordination

#### Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

The Washington State Legislature created the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) in 1998 to increase transportation access by removing barriers through coordinated transportation services statewide. Significant local, state, federal, and private money is spent on accessing transportation. We cannot afford to have needs unmet due to uncoordinated spending.

The ACCT is chaired and staffed by WSDOT. The Council represents numerous public and state agencies and private transportation providers in an effort to achieve optimum coordination. This coordination is critically important as it leverages all public and private funds together to improve effectiveness of the return on investment for transportation; reduces duplication and unnecessary service trips; and makes it easier for users to access essential services.

#### Trip Planner

WSDOT joined Oregon's DOT (ODOT) to develop a bi-state Regional Trip Planner system. The Trip Planner tool will improve coordination and use of public transportation. A multiyear project Trip Planner is the Internet-based, integrated transportation information system. It will reduce barriers to travel and services by capitalizing on the efficiencies of the Internet for the planning of trips including schedules, routes,